ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:

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WHAT ONE PERSON CAN DO

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Almost everything that offends the eye, ear or nose is fair game for persons who want to get involved in cleaning and protecting their environment. Air, water, land, and noise pollution can be controlled most effectively when individual citizens are part of the coalition of concern.

Pollution comes in so many forms, and from sources so numerous and diverse that questions of where to begin, and what one person by himself can do, may seem overwhelming at first to the individual.

There ARE steps, however, that every individual can take to reduce the contamination of our air, water and land.

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BE ALERT

Many of us have lived with litter and noise, with degraded air and second-rate water so long that we no longer are conscious of the poor quality. Stop once each day to look, really look, at your immediate surroundings, and ask yourself, "How do I feel about what I see, about the air and water, about the sounds around me? Am I happy with them?" Chances are if something bothers you, it is affecting others as well.

MAKE A NOTE

When you come across incidents of pollution—a belching smokestack, an adulterated stream, a festering roadside dumping area—make a note of it. With its limited staff, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency can only do so much . . . it has only so many eyes and ears.

GET THE FACTS

Jot down the date, the time of day, the type of pollution, and the location where you observed the problem. If available, note the owner of the property or facility where the problem occurs. Photographs are excellent documentation of your complaint.

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REPORT THE FACTS

Illinois EPA maintains regional offices in eight cities throughout the state. Persons with complaints should make direct contact with field surveillance personnel in Chicago, Champaign, Collinsville, Aurora, Rockford, Marion, Springfield, or Peoria, as soon as possible after the pollution is observed. Technical personnel will make followup investigations, and their work will be most productive while the incident is still fresh.

FOLLOW UP

Check back with the same EPA office to ask what results came out of the investigation. A week's time is often sufficient to obtain a definite indication of what further action might be taken.

TESTIFY

If sufficient evidence is obtained to confirm that a violation of environmental law may have occurred, EPA attorneys will prepare an enforcement case to be filed by the Attorney General before the Pollution Control Board. Be willing to testify—on your own complaint or on other cases in which you may be able to provide evidence. People directly affected by pollution are important in deliberations by the Board.

ATTEND HEARINGS

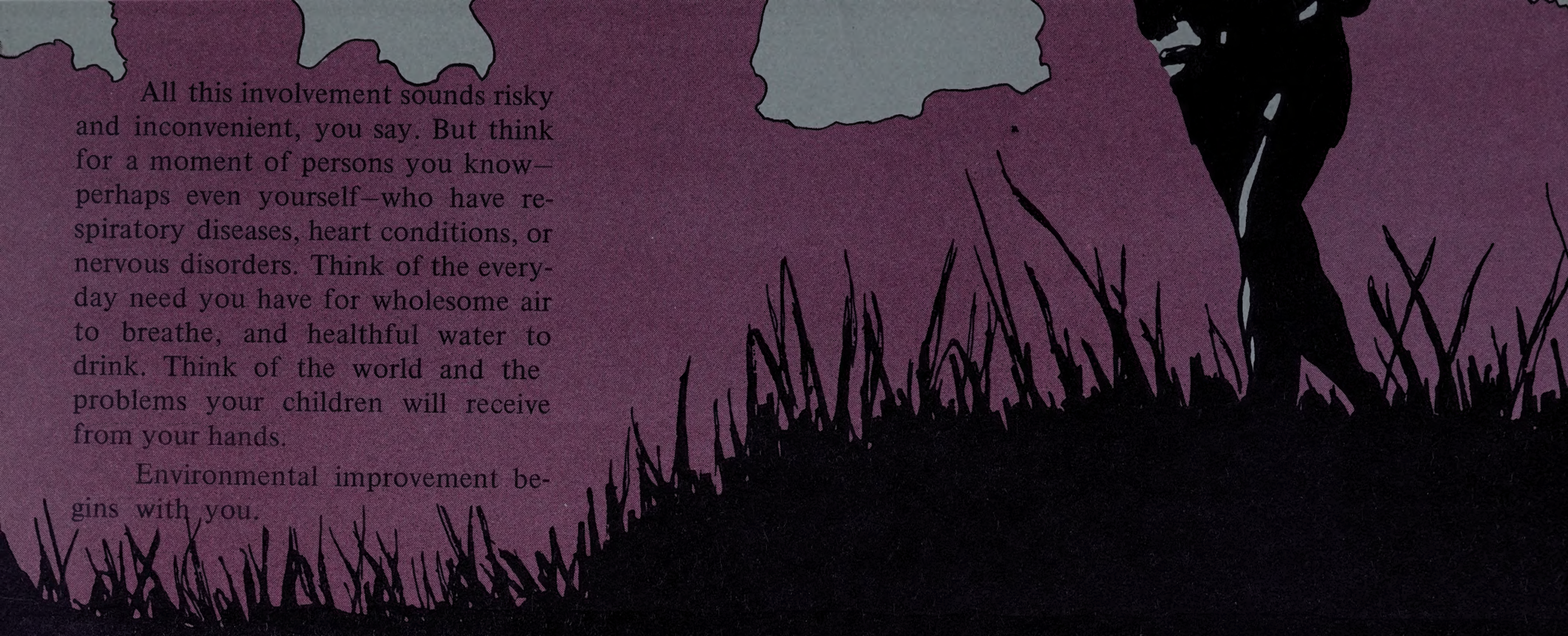
Even if you don't have personal knowledge about a specific pollution enforcement case, you can increase your environmental awareness, become familiar with how the enforcement process works, and demonstrate your concern by attending public hearings scheduled by the Board in your area. They are announced in the classified section of your newspaper, under "legal notices".

FILE COMPLAINT

The Illinois Environmental Protection Act includes a unique provision permitting individual citizens to file complaints directly, on their own standing. Any person may take a case to the Pollution Control Board without referral by EPA and without going through the Attorney General's office. He should be prepared to present evidence substantiating his complaint, and must be careful to follow legal procedures set out in the Act for the protection of those accused. The Board will order hearings on individual complaints if they determine they are genuine and not frivolous. In such cases, the burden of proof is on the person filing the complaint.

Individuals may also file with the Board proposals for new regulations or changes in existing rules, along with supporting evidence and reasoning.

Information regarding any of these procedures may be found in Title 8: Enforcement, of the Illinois Environmental Protection Act. Copies are available from EPA's Public Inquiry Section. Also write and ask for a copy of Your Illinois World-a guidebook to individual action on environmental concern.



All this involvement sounds risky and inconvenient, you say. But think for a moment of persons you know—perhaps even yourself—who have respiratory diseases, heart conditions, or nervous disorders. Think of the everyday need you have for wholesome air to breathe, and healthful water to drink. Think of the world and the problems your children will receive from your hands.

Environmental improvement begins with you.

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For copies of the Environmental Protection Act, for other information, or to report complaints and submit comments, write to:

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